

**Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Education and Psychology
PhD School of Education, History of Education PhD Program**

Thesis of the PhD dissertation

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**The Eötvös Collegium as an elite teacher training institute.
History of the Baron Eötvös József Collegium, 1895–1950.**

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I. The presentation of the subject of the PhD dissertation and the motivation of choosing the topic¹

The name of the Eötvös József Collegium sounds familiar to a part of the Hungarian clerisy, since former members of the Collegium have pursued successful academic careers in various fields or have become renowned teachers. However, its history and role in the Hungarian higher education have not been discussed adequately so far, because no comprehensive work has been written on this subject apart from an attempt.² As an alumnus of the Collegium, I have embarked on filling this gap in my PhD dissertation.

In the past decade, the evolution of the profession of the Hungarian secondary school teachers has been discussed in several works (*Németh*, 2002; *Németh*, 2004; *Ladányi*, 2008; *Keller*, 2010). Although all of the authors mention the institute, none of them clarifies its role in the evolution of this profession. I am convinced that this issue can also be transferred to a new context through the presentation of the development of the Collegium and the evolution of its operational principles. The institutionalization of the teaching profession reached a dead-end exactly at the time of the foundation of the boarding-school: by 1899 the new structure of the teacher training had come into existence through the formation of the teacher training institute incorporated into the faculty of humanities at the Budapest University and through the foundation of the Eötvös Collegium. Those who had been accepted to the Collegium could gain higher qualification in their own fields beside the teacher training seminars at the university and their membership at the teacher training institute. Although the new boarding-school operated as an individual institute, its educational system rather complemented the university studies. The 27th Act of Parliament, § 1-9 in 1924 basically extended this system to the other universities in the country. Thus, the structure that evolved in 1899 determined the secondary school teacher training up to 1949 (*Garai*, 2011. 199–202.).

In my paper I present the methods of the research aiming at the exploration of the history of the Collegium together with the main groups of sources, the structural organisation of the dissertation and some of the results of the research. I hope that with my PhD dissertation I cannot only fill this gap in the history of the education in Hungary, but I can also complement the history of the development of the Hungarian teacher training system with the

¹ This paper is published in: Imre Garai (2013): Az Eötvös Collegium, mint a tanári elitképzés műhelye (egy doktori kutatás folyamata). In: Gabriella Baska, Judit Hegedűs and Attila Nóbik (eds.): A neveléstörténet változó arcai. A múlt értékei, a jelen kihívásai és a jövő. ELTE Eötvös Kiadó, Budapest. 41–51. I would like to express my thanks to Zsuzsanna Ötvös for translating my study.

² It was Domokos Kosáry, who wrote the comprehensive history of the first generation at the Collegium. His work has helped the accomplishment of my research and the completion of the dissertation (*Kosáry*, 1989. 9–40).

presentation of “the Hungarian École Normale Supérieure.” I intend to achieve these goals while at the same time I also hope to clarify the major questions in connection with the past of the Collegium which seem most interesting to its present-day members (its college-like character, its eliminations in 1919 and in 1950) with the help of the sources.

II. The methods of the research, the major groups of the sources, the structure of the dissertation

I have divided the history of the Collegium to seven epochs partly following Domokos Kosáry’s suggestion, and partly merging the main turning points of the political history and the internal history of the institute.³ The determination of the single epochs was based partly on the generational changes at the Collegium and partly on the shifts of paradigm in the educational system of the institute, but naturally the political changes that influenced the Collegium also affected the designation of the epochs.

These epochs are discussed in the dissertation in single chapters: these chapters are universally built following five dimensions of the analysis. The first dimension is provided by the statistical analysis of the students accepted to or rejected from the institute. In the period under examination, 1204 students became members of the Collegium,⁴ while the applications of 1692 students were rejected. Out of the latter group, the only available information about 368 persons is their names; no other data is available about them. Thus, I only focused on the remaining 1324 persons for the purposes of the analysis whose personal data were within reach.⁵ Similarly to the papers of Gábor Kende and Gábor I. Kovács (*Kende and Kovács*, 2011a. 75–97.; *Kende and Kovács*, 99–199.), in my dissertation I reveal the following data regarding both groups: areal (according to region, county and settlement type) and confessional distribution of the students’ place of birth, the types of secondary schools they attended, their majors at the university, their social status through the professions of their legal guardians at the moment of their admission or rejection, and the reasons of their lack of success in their studies or of their rejection. For the determination of the social status I used the main categories and subcategories of the profession and enterprise statistics in the questionnaire designed for the census in 1930 (it was digitized by Péter Tibor Nagy; *Nagy*

³ These epochs are as follows: 1895–1910, 1911–1918, 1919–1927, 1928–1935, 1936–1944, 1945–1948, 1948–1950.

⁴ Their personal materials can be found in the Collegium archives: MDKL box 1, folder 1, bunch 1– box 23, folder 25, bunch 70.

⁵ Their personal materials can be found in the Collegium archives: MDKL box 24, folder 26, bunch 1– box 33, folder 49, bunch 58.

2010). The application of the questionnaire can be justified with two factors: its system of categories is more refined than that of the questionnaires in the 19th century or at the beginning of the 20th century; and the year 1930 is approximately at a similar distance from the foundation and elimination of the institute. Thus, the collection of the personal data of the students admitted to and rejected from the Collegium in this system can also help to compare the changes in society at the end of the 19th century and in the middle of the 20th century. The examination of the changes in society in larger periods (the age of the Dual Monarchy, periods between the two World Wars and between 1945 and 1950) would make it difficult to show how the leaders of the institute reacted to the changes in the market structure (Acts of Parliament No. 11 in 1924; No. 11 in 1934; No. 33 in 1948) and to the political and social changes. In these smaller epochs, however, the fine changes of the recruitment can be tracked down easily. Thus, I am convinced that the division of the social examination to seven epochs is necessary.

The second and third dimensions – which are closely connected – in all subchapters are provided by the analysis of the personal distribution of the leaders of the Collegium (the curators, the directors⁶ and the teachers) and that of the educational aims.⁷ In connection with this issue, I also examine which members of the Collegium could join the work of the teaching staff after gaining the status of senior students.⁸ The educational paradigm changed in 1927–1928 and in June 1948. In detecting these changes I could exploit the minutes of the teachers' official meetings⁹ and the reports about the classes prepared by the teachers¹⁰ as sources apart from the examination of the changes in the teaching staff at the Collegium.

The fourth dimension is provided by the analysis of the relationship of the Collegium with the Department of Religion and Public Education (henceforth DRPE) as superior governmental institution, with the faculty of humanities at the Budapest University (called Pázmány Péter University from 1920) and with the Teacher Training Institute. The institute could not remain unaffected by the political changes; the relocation of the political relations frequently influenced the positions at the Collegium. Its relations with the university and the

⁶ The personal materials and correspondence of the directors (Géza Bartoniek, Zoltán Gombocz and Miklós Szabó) can be found in the Collegium archives: MDKL box 38, folder 63– box 40, folder 67.

⁷ The personal materials of regular appointed teachers can be found in the Collegium archives: MDKL box 40, folder 70/1 – box 40, folder 71/11. The personal materials of those teachers who were appointed after 1945 can be found in MDKL box 41, folder 73/a.

⁸ The documents concerning the donation of senior status can be found in MDKL box 47, folder 85.

⁹ MDKL box 54, folder 102/a–d. Reports about the teachers' official meetings in the Eötvös Collegium, 1897–1950.

¹⁰ MDKL box 52, folder 101/a– box 54, folder 101/10/b. Reports about the classes in the Eötvös Collegium, 1895–1950.

Teacher Training Institute clarify how the previously dominant characters of the teacher training system regularly tried to limit or end the autonomy of the special institute unique in the Hungarian higher education. For this issue, sources are provided by the Hungarian National Archives, sections K 636,¹¹ K 592¹² and XIX-I-1-h, fonds of the Eötvös Collegium¹³ and by the material found in the archives of the institute.¹⁴

The fifth dimension of the examination regarding all epochs is provided by the changes in the internal life of the Collegium. In these subchapters, I discuss the habits of the students and their changes, the internal system of government,¹⁵ the students with non-Hungarian citizenship present in the institute who also contributed to the educational system and to the colourful students' life,¹⁶ study trips in the country and abroad, scholarships that also inherently belonged to the educational system of the Collegium.¹⁷ Apart from the sources available in the archives, accepting Rudolf Paksa's argumentation, I also reached the conclusion after reading the memoirs of the previous alumni of the institute that it is not possible to write the history of the Collegium without the use of these works (cf. *Paksa*, 2004. 129.). Thus, I compared the literary works¹⁸ and memoirs¹⁹ used for this section of the examination with the sources in the archives in the hope of gaining a more complex picture of the historical reality, since these types of sources partly control and partly complement each other.

The seven subchapters together with the antecedents of the institute (*Garai*, 2011. 176–202.) present the educational aims of an elite teacher training boarding-school, the changes in the teaching staff and its operation in the 19th- and 20th-century Hungarian history

¹¹ HNA K 636. box 49, item 25. (1919) – box 1024, item 44–1 (1942–1944–1). Affairs of the Eötvös Collegium 1919–1944.

¹² HNA, K592, bunch 143, item 18 (1920)–bunch 193, item 13 (1922). The affairs of the Eötvös Collegium between 1920 and 1922. In this period, after its elimination in 1919, the Collegium belonged to the Secondary School Division. It was only after 1923 that the Collegium was reattached to the 4th University and College Division, where its affairs were handled from its foundation.

¹³ HNA XIX-I-1-h. box 112, item 90–3 (1946–1947)– 1400–52/1950 (box 249.). Affairs of the Eötvös Collegium 1946–1951.

¹⁴ HNA box 50, folder 96/1–6. Nominations to the DRPE and ministerial decrees, 1895–1945. MDKL box 50, folder 96/a/1–8. Nominations to the DRPE and ministerial decrees, 1945–1950.

¹⁵ MDKL box 51, folder 97/1–6. Documents about the inner life of the Collegium, 1895–1949. MDKL box 51, folder 97/a. Documents about the inner life of the Collegium, 1945–1950.

¹⁶ MDKL box 34, folder 50– box 35., folder 52. Foreigner students and guests in the Collegium, 1895–1948.

¹⁷ MDKL box 36, folder 55–56. Documents of study trips in the country and abroad, scholarships, 1895–1948.

¹⁸ A few examples for literary works: Aladár Kuncz (1975): *Fekete kolostor*. (Feljegyzések a francia internáltságból.) Szépirodalmi Kiadó, Budapest. Géza Laczkó (1938): *Királyhágó*. Regény. Grill Károly Kiadó, Budapest; or Dezső Szabó (1965): *Életeim*. Volumes I–II. Szépirodalmi Kiadó, Budapest.

¹⁹ A few examples for memoirs: Zoltán Bassola (1998): *Ki voltam...* Egy kultuszminisztériumi államtitkár vallomásai. Országos Pedagógiai Könyvtár és Múzeum, Budapest, András Fodor (1991): *A kollégium*. Napló, 1947–1950. Magvető Kiadó, Budapest., Árpád Kucsman (2006): *Egy kémikus a régi Eötvös Collegiumban*. ELTE Eötvös József Collegium – Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, Budapest.

abounding in turning points beyond the development of the Hungarian secondary teachers' profession. In my opinion, in this structural organization, a more complex picture of the single epochs can be gained than the discussion of the single dimensions in the main chapters could have offered. This latter solution does not seem reasonable, either, due to the huge amount of source material and due to the epochs that can be easily identified within the internal history of the Collegium and the periods clearly emerging from the memoirs.

III. Summary of the major results of the research

The members of the Collegium were mainly admitted from social groups belonging to the middle class. The guardians belonging to the main category "agricultural production" are usually landowners with estates under 50 yokes, or sometimes smallholders or season workers. However, guardians belonging to this main category were underrepresented in comparison to the similar proportions at the university and even among the professors between the two World Wars. Their proportion increased to 12% between 1936 and 1944. The Collegium members belonging to the main category of industry, mining, metallurgy and transportation were also represented in a small number in the institute: up to 1936 their proportion fluctuates between 6% and 7%, while during Miklós Szabó's directorship their number increased remarkably, to 16%. In accordance with the political changes, in the period after 1945 they added up one fifth, then one third of the Collegium members. In accordance with the increase in their number, the proportion of the guardians belonging to the main category of public service diminished: starting from its foundation, the Collegium had chosen the majority of its members from social groups serving in public education and at academic institutions. In this period between 1936 and 1944 some fall-back can be observed due to the drastic loss in the social prestige of the secondary school teachers' profession, but in the period between 1945 and 1948 they again added up slightly more than the half of the students admitted, then in the period after 1948, in almost two years' time their proportion again diminished to a third. Children of guardians active in military defence and in white-collar freelance professions traditionally chose the teachers' career in small numbers, since these professions had a high rate of self-recruitment, thus, their presence in the Collegium was also minimal. Usually a fifth of the students admitted, then after World War I a third of them belonged to the main category "socially aided, supported by orphanages, without profession." However, this openness towards the lower layers of society is misleading, since the majority of these applicants had originally middle-class income, but their financial situation was

damaged through tragedies within the family, in the World Wars or during the depression. They tried to recreate their former social status through their admission to the Collegium, or through becoming secondary school teachers (class 9–class 6 payment) or taking up careers in the higher education (class 5 payment).

It can also be observed that the proportion of the students rejected coming from agricultural background is very low in all epochs. In contrast, the applicants belonging to the main category of industry, mining, metallurgy, and transportation surpassed the number of their fellow students admitted to the Collegium in almost all epochs up to 1945. Mainly the children of the less educated industrial workers and handicraftsmen tried to gain access to the institute – with little success. In the main category of the public service, beside the public servants the teachers tried to gain access for their children to the Collegium perceived as a mobility channel, but only a few of them became eventually members of the institute. The proportion of the students rejected belonging to the main category “socially aided, supported by orphanages, without profession” changes between one fifth and one third in the various epochs. However, in these groups we can mainly find individuals belonging to lower layers of society, their financial background was usually enough only for the completion of the secondary school studies and for the starting of the university studies. In their case, it was questionable right at the moment of the application whether they had enough financial resources for the completion of the university studies, since in the first year free membership was only granted to less than a third of the applicants (before 1918, the half of the tuition fee was 200 korona, the full tuition fee was 400 korona, in the 1930’s years these fees were modified to 300 pengő and 600 pengő respectively, although this time the number of free memberships was increased to a fourth of the number of all memberships available.)²⁰

Regarding the areal and confessional distribution of the students admitted, it can be stated that in the period between 1895 and 1918 the majority of the students admitted came from the evangelical school system of the mining cities in today’s Slovakia (Felvidék). The balanced areal distribution characteristic before World War I changed after 1918: the students admitted usually came from the central part of the country (Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun county and the capital city) and from the counties found in the economic axis between Vienna and Budapest. In the Gombocz period, slightly more than 40% of the students admitted came from these areas, while after World War II basically every third member of the Collegium was a

²⁰ For half of the places available at the Collegium the students were supposed to pay the full tuition fee, and a quarter of the students were supposed to pay the half of the tuition fee. Minutes of the final teachers’ meeting held on 14 June 1929. MDKL box 54. folder 102/b.

resident of the capital city due to the destroyed infrastructure and the economic difficulties. In the period between 1895 and 1928 the evangelists were twice and two and a half times overrepresented among the members of the Collegium compared to their proportions in the country and at the university respectively. The members of the Reformed Church could only gain similar position as the one their Lutheran fellows had in the first part of the 1930's years, due to the fall-back of the evangelists; this process can be attributed to the slow expansion of the Reformed Church in the secondary schools that can be observed among the secondary school students after 1890 (cf. *Kende and Kovács*, 2011. 92.). Roman Catholics were underrepresented in each of the epochs in comparison to the similar data about the university and about the professors' board between the two World Wars. The members of the Orthodox Church practically disappeared from the Collegium after 1918, while the number of Greek Catholics radically diminished. From smaller confessions, in single epochs Baptists and Unitarians also appeared. The proportion of the Israelites among the applicants reached their overall proportion in society up to 1918, but they were underrepresented in the institute in comparison to their presence at the university and at the faculty of humanities. After the 25th Act of Parliament was accepted in 1920, it was difficult to find a single member from the Israelite confession in the Collegium. Between 1938 and 1944 they could not been accepted to the Collegium due to the further repressive acts towards the Israelite community. After 1945, however, they reappeared among the admitted students significantly surpassing their proportion in society: they added up 5% of the students admitted (cf. *Karády*, 2005. 203–204). The examination of the students rejected as control group basically confirmed all of the above statements.

Originally, the institute was founded with the aim of deepening the university material for its selected members through merging the individually led instruction with the seminar system. However, due to the small number of students at the classes and due to the continually expanding stock of the Collegium library the alumni of the institute could acquire higher qualifications compared to the university students even in the early years, which supported the start of academic careers. Since several members of the first generation had become university teachers by the middle of the 1920's and this generation had taken over the directorship of the institute by 1928, the educational aim was modified following curator Pál Teleki's initiative: the Collegium was supposed to prepare its members academic careers. The admission process and the qualification system of the Collegium studies were transformed in accordance with the new aims. In 1948, the director, Tibor Lutter and his followers intended

to transform the Eötvös Collegium to the educational institution of Marxist scholars in accordance with the political and social changes in progress. However, their attempt at the transformation remained unsuccessful due to the drastic change in the policy of higher education within a short time (the dual university reform in 1949–1950) and the institute was eliminated *pro forma* in August 1950, and *de jure* in 1951. Accordingly, the authors of the contemporary memoirs had the impression that the members of the Communist fraction intended to eliminate the Collegium deliberately. Our sources contradict these opinions: between May and October 1949 Lutter prepared several plans of reform to save the institute, but none of the superior departments considered his ideas.

In the first decade of its operation, up to 1906, the DRPE regarded the boarding-school as an experimental institute. When György Lukács, Minister of Religion and Public Education appointed the first teachers, he also confirmed that he intended to develop the Collegium in a pre-planned way. The construction of the palace in the Ménesi Street and the delegation of Romanian and Bosnian university students to the institute also fit this intention: with the latter action the Department aimed at the deliberate development of a pro-Hungary clerisy before World War I. Changes took place in the relations after the civil democratic revolution in 1918 and after the evolution of the Hungarian Republic of Councils. On 14 July 1919 the Collegium was merged into the Secondary School Teacher Training College by the Commissariat of Public Education.²¹ However, the action was not turned into effect, thus, the organization of the Collegium remained basically intact. In April 1919 Loránd Eötvös, who had defended the interests of the Collegium, died. Thus, from a political viewpoint, the institute was left defenceless, due to which and due to Géza Bartoniek's errors in diplomacy the DRPE intended to remove him from the leading position of the institute through compulsory retirement in July 1921. However, Pál Teleki, who was appointed curator of the institute in the meantime, managed to inhibit his retirement, and his person could also guarantee the political support of the new rule. Teleki also managed to secure the reattachment of the Collegium affairs from the Secondary School Division of the DRPE to the University and College Division after 1919, which would have guaranteed the acknowledgement of the college status. However, following the legal debate on the 27th Act of Parliament in 1924 the Teacher Training Institute managed to limit the educational autonomy of the boarding-school; and after the changes in the salaries in 1925, due to the inadequate payments of the director and the teachers of the Collegium the college-like

²¹ 159.085 VI/. Class 1. Deputy Commissar György Lukács on the subject of the incorporation of the Eötvös Collegium. Budapest, 14 July 1919. HNA K 636. box 49., item 25 (1919).

character of the institute practically ended. Then a long struggle started for the acknowledgement of the college-like character of the institute, which was finally bestowed upon the Collegium by Zoltán Tildy, President of the Republic on 11 November 1946 due to the mediation of Dezső Keresztury, Minister of Religion and Public Education (and director of the Collegium at the same time). Following the so-called debate²² on specialized boarding-schools evolving around the Collegium the support of the DRPE towards the Collegium had practically finished by November 1947. The leaving of Dezső Keresztury on 31 July 1948 was caused partly by this, and partly by József Révai's open intervention, who stepped in the internal conflict that occurred after the election of the student government president on 5 May 1948 (see *Fodor*, 1991. 110–114). Although Tibor Lutter was supported by the DRPE, the new director could not substitute for a part of the teachers, who left the Collegium together with Keresztury. Moreover, he also dismissed numerous teachers in the name of the transformation and he complemented the staff with politically trustful members of the Communist Party. Consequently, the 82 weekly classes of the Keresztury period had diminished to 35 classes per week by November 1949.²³ Thus, the educational system of the Collegium gradually became meaningless.

Following the second university reform in 1950, the DRPE started to copy the Soviet system of higher education intensively (*Ladányi*, 1986. 26). In the higher education subordinated to the target numbers of the First Five-Year Plan there was no need for scholarly teachers capable of thinking critically, the institute was taken over by the Course Supply Firm, which operated the building of the boarding-school as a simple youth hostel.²⁴

²² It is discussed by *Paksa*, 2004. 122–127; the writings of the arguing partners are published word-by-word in *Szász*, 1985. 245–357.

²³ 484/1949. Tibor Lutter's report about the second semester's schedule of the academic year 1949/1950. Budapest, 25th November 1949. HNA XIX-I-1-h. 1515/1949–1950 (box 358).

²⁴ 337/1950. Minutes of the tradition of the building of the Collegium to the Course Supply Firm. Budapest, 22nd August 1950. MDL box 51. folder 97/a.

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